

Washington

How Cambridge Flunked the First Test

By JAMES RESTON

WASHINGTON, April 27—The saddest men in Washington these days are the intellectuals on the White House staff who helped deal with the Cuban issue. McGeorge Bundy, former dean of the faculty at Harvard; Walt Whitman Rostow of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the Harvard historian.

These highly intelligent and sensitive men do not, of course, tell the President of the United States what to do, but Bundy and Rostow in particular were influential in the planning stage, and are now even more controversial here than when they first arrived.

Oddly part of the policy miscalculation was due to a lack of precisely those qualities which the intellectuals were expected to bring to bear on major policy decisions.

The theory was that these men, above everything else, would be extremely thorough in their staff work and bring to the highest counsels of the Executive a sense of history. Yet they have left the impression that the Cuban decision was reached without adequate staff preparation, and without that larger perspective of history which places specific decisions in proper relation to the commitments and objectives of the nation.

For example, even after the adventure had failed, another White House staff officer said that the possibilities and consequences of failure had never even been considered. Secretary of State Rusk did not bring his own department's intelligence unit into the staff work. The State Department's policy planning staff was not consulted, nor was Adlai E. Stevenson until the very end, when Bundy went to New York and filled him in.

The President himself, of course, was responsible for establishing the system whereby the Cuban decision was reached in a series of informal meetings at the White House. Most of the Cabinet members of the National Security Council met in these meetings from time to time, but apparently there was very little independent evaluation of the data presented in these meetings and little effort made to bring into the discussion top officials who were known to be opposed to the

Charles Evans Hughes, former Chief Justice of the United States and former Secretary of State, once remarked to Mr. Justice Felix Frankfurter that he would never venture an opinion to a Secretary of State about what should be done on an important question of policy without first studying all the relevant documents over the preceding six months.

This is the point of all this. In the Cuban case a great many opinions were given freely by comparatively inexperienced and often tired men who had not read the documents or consulted with the officials who had—all this at a time when they were meeting a great many other responsibilities, and trying to play social lion in the evenings as well.

Accordingly, the intellectuals who arrived here as critics are now the objects of criticism themselves, and this was probably inevitable. Congress has always been skeptical of powerful officials in the White House, especially if they have brains. The State Department has been vaguely suspicious of another center of foreign policy power close to the President. And the President's political aides, who were with him on Capitol Hill before Harvard moved to Washington, have always been a little skeptical of the articulate new members of the official family.

Cuba has stirred all this up sooner than was expected. Despite all the efforts by the president to produce unity, there is a lot of muttering about "Bundy and Company" supporting their former M. I. T. colleague Richard M. Bissell Jr., who made the C. I. A.'s intelligence estimate to the President, and tipping the balance of power that way.

Much of this is nonsense, for while Bundy favored the Cuban policy, Schlesinger had serious misgivings and expressed them. That, however, is the way it is in this city when things go wrong, especially when the men involved are themselves such articulate critics of the mistakes of past Administrations.

One result of all this is that the political side of the White House staff will probably be strengthened in the future, with Theodore C. Sorensen, the President's closest associate before the election, playing a more important role in foreign policy discussions. Also, Allen Dulles, who has been in the post and is now in the post, may play a more important role in foreign policy discussions. Also, Allen Dulles, who has been in the post and is now in the post, may play a more important role in foreign policy discussions.